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 & the Madmen

Ex-Aide of C.I.A. Says U.S. Bombed Leper Colony

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 19—A former Central Intelligence Agency official said in a new book published today that the Air Force bombed a North Vietnamese leper colony in 1966 after Air Force photo analysts mistakenly concluded that the buildings—surrounded by two rows of barbed-wire fence—were a North Vietnamese division headquarters.

The former agent, Patrick J. McGarvey, spent 14 years with the C.I.A., the Defense Intelligence Agency and Air Force intelligence before resigning in 1969.

In his book, "C.I.A., the Myth & Madness," published by the Saturday Review Press, Mr. McGarvey charges that defense agency and C.I.A. specialists were overwhelmingly concerned with providing what he called "intelligence to please" and would often distort facts to do so.

In some cases, he contended, vital information was withheld from the White House by bureaucrats anxious to avoid criticism.

The leper-colony incident began, Mr. McGarvey wrote, after the Air Force reported that it had spotted a division headquarters in reconnaissance photographs. At the time, the service was eager to destroy the

fighting capability of the North Vietnamese Army, then largely still in the north.

"They spotted a huge, heavily guarded compound at a village called Quynh Loc," Mr. McGarvey said. "No public mention was ever made of the incident."

"An honest portrayal of what intelligence is all about must conclude that the C.I.A. is an insufferable bureaucratic mess with little or no central direction sorely needing drastic change," Mr. McGarvey wrote.

A spokesman for the C.I.A. confirmed that Mr. McGarvey had worked there, but refused comment on the book. The book was sent to the agency for review before publication, Mr. McGarvey said, and only a few minor segments were deleted.

In a letter to Mr. McGarvey clearing the book for publication, an agency official noted that if any claim is made that the C.I.A. "in any way approves your book or confirms the accuracy of any information contained here therein, it will be officially denied."

Sputnik Reported Stolen

Although the book's title deals with the C.I.A., the bulk of Mr. McGarvey's criticisms and anecdotes are drawn from his service with the Defense Intelligence Agency during the Vietnam War.



Associated Press

Patrick J. McGarvey

Garvey said. "The compound was isolated and ringed with barbed wire. Inside were areas shut off from each other with more barbed wire."

Both the Air Force operations personnel and the officers attached to the Joint Chiefs of Staff "concluded that this had to be a division headquarters," Mr. McGarvey wrote. The initial defense agency analysis did not support that conclusion, he added, and it was officially reported that there was "no information to support the existence of a division headquarters at that location."

Mr. McGarvey, who was serving with the Defense Intelligence Agency at the time, noted that it had previously been determined that the North Vietnamese Army had abandoned all of its identifiable garrison areas and military camps shortly after the air war began in 1965 "and took to the hills and caves."

Nonetheless, he wrote, the

Joint Chiefs "insisted that D.I.A. label the facility a possible military headquarters site." His account went on: "D.I.A. acceded to this demand. On May 6, 1966, a heavy bombing raid was mounted against the facility."

'No Public Mention Made'

"A few days later," Mr. McGarvey wrote, "the North Vietnamese charged that the United States had bombed a leper colony at Quynh Loc, killing 30 patients and wounding 34. D.I.A. examined the photos and compared them with those on which they had based the mission."

"They proved to be the possible military headquarters site," the former intelligence

In the book, Mr. McGarvey also reports that C.I.A. agents successfully stole the Soviet Sputnik for three hours while the missile was on a world tour shortly after its successful launch. The C.I.A. team "completely dismantled it, took samples of its structure, photographed it, reassembled it, and returned it to its original place undetected," he said.

Mr. McGarvey, now a resident of suburban Washington, is known to have spent some years working under cover as a clandestine C.I.A. agent in South Vietnam and elsewhere, but deals lightly with his personal experiences in the book.

"This book is not an attempt to expose the C.I.A.," he wrote. "One of my reasons for writing this book is to shed some light on the most damaging, persistent myth afoot today about the C.I.A.—that it is an efficient, well-run machine capable of almost any act of trickery or intrigue."

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